WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method of Internet Protocol (IP) provisioning for use in a cable network having a network provisioning unit (NPU) in communication with a plurality of embedded settop boxes (eSTBs), the method comprising:

5   receiving eSTB IP provisioning requests from eSTBs provided by at least two different vendors, the eSTB IP provisioning requests outputted according to a first protocol; and

transmitting eSTB IP provisioning data from the NPU to the eSTBs requesting the eSTB IP provisioning, wherein the eSTB IP provisioning data is

10   outputted according to the first protocol such that provisioning of the eSTBs is standardized for each vendor.

2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising selecting the eSTB IP provisioning data according to the vendor of the requesting eSTB.

3.   The method of claim 2 further comprising determining the

15   vendor of the requesting eSTB using the NPU based on an eSTB vendor identifier included in the eSTB IP provisioning request.

4.   The method of claim 3 wherein the NPU includes a database comprising IP provisioning data associated by vendor identifiers with a plurality of eSTB vendors, and wherein determining the vendor of the requesting eSTB includes

20   searching the database for a vendor identifier that matches with the eSTB vendor identifier.

5.   The method of claim 3 wherein the eSTB vendor identifier includes at least one of a serial number, a hardware version, a software version, an Organization Unique Identifier (OUI), a model number, or a vendor name.

25   6.   The method of claim 1 wherein each eSTB is associated with Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and wherein each CPE includes an embedded

cable modem (eCM), and the method further comprises bridging IP signals through the eCM to the eSTB.

7.   The method of claim 1 wherein the first protocol is defined according to a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP).

5   8.   A network provisioning unit (NPU) for Internet Protocol (IP) provisioning, the NPU in communication with a cable network having a plurality of embedded settop boxes (eSTBs), the NPU configured to:

receive eSTB IP provisioning requests from eSTBs provided by at least two different vendors, the eSTB IP provisioning requests transmitted according

10   to a first protocol; and

transmit eSTB IP provisioning data to the eSTBs requesting the eSTB IP provisioning, wherein the eSTB IP provisioning data is transmitted according to the first protocol such that provisioning of the eSTBs is standard for each vendor in so far as each eSTB utilizes the first protocol for provisioning.

15   9.   The NPU of claim 8 configured to select the eSTB IP provisioning data according to the vendor of the requesting eSTB.

10.   The NPU of claim 9 configured to determine the vendor of the requesting eSTB based on an eSTB vendor identifier included in the eSTB IP provisioning request.

20   11.   The NPU of claim 10 including a database comprising IP provisioning data associated by vendor identifiers with a plurality of eSTB vendors, and configured to determine the vendor of the requesting eSTB by searching the database for a vendor identifier that matches with the eSTB vendor identifier.

12.   The NPU of claim 11 configured to identify the vendor based

25   on the eSTB identifier being at least one of a serial number, a hardware version, a software version, an Organization Unique Identifier (OUI), a model number, or a vendor name.

13.   The NPU of claim 8 configured to permit IP provisioning wherein the first protocol is defined according to the Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP).

14.   A system for Internet Protocol (IP) provisioning over a cable network, the system comprising:

a plurality of embedded settop boxes (eSTBs) in communication with the cable network, at least two of the eSTB provided by at least two different vendors, each eSTB configured to transmit IP provisioning requests to the network according to a first protocol; and

a network provisioning unit (NPU) in communication with the network, the NPU configured to receive the eSTB IP provisioning requests and the transmit eSTB IP provisioning data in response thereto, wherein the eSTB IP provisioning data is transmitted according to the first protocol such that provisioning of the eSTBs is standard for each vendor in so far as each eSTB utilizes the first protocol for provisioning.

15.   The system of claim 14 wherein the NPU selects the provisioning data according to the vendor of the requesting eSTB.

16.   The system of claim 15 wherein the NPU determines the vendor of the requesting eSTB based on an eSTB vendor identifier included in the eSTB IP provisioning request.

17.   The system of claim 16 wherein the NPU includes a database comprising IP provisioning data associated by vendor identifiers with a plurality of eSTB vendors, and wherein the NPU determines the vendor of the requesting eSTB by searching the database for a vendor identifier that matches with the eSTB vendor identifier.

18.   The system of claim 16 wherein the eSTB vendor identifier includes at least one of a serial number, a hardware version, a software version, an Organization Unique Identifier (OUI), a model number, or a vendor name.

19.   The system of claim 14 wherein each eSTB is associated with Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and wherein each CPE includes an embedded cable modem (eCM) for bridging IP provisioning signals through the eCM to the eSTB.

5   20.   The system of claim 14 wherein the first protocol is defined according to a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP).